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HENRY MELVILLE KING



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REV. JOHN MYLES

REV. JOHN MYLES
AND THE
FOUNDING OF
THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
IN MASSACHUSETTS

AN HISTORICAL ADDRESS
DELIVERED AT THE DEDICATION OF A MONUMENT
IN BARRINGTON, RHODE ISLAND
(Formerly Swansea, Mass.)
JUNE 17, 1905

BY
HENRY MELVILLE KING
PASTOR OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IN PROVIDENCE



PROVIDENCE, R. I.
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PREFACE.

Rev. John Myles came to New England from Swansea, Wales, in 1663, being driven from his native land by religious persecution in the reign of Charles II. He settled in Rehoboth, Mass., and subsequently removed to that part of Sowams known as Wannamoissett, to which was given the name of Swansea, in remembrance of the Welsh town from which Mr. Myles came. In the old world he had been a successful preacher and leader of men, and in the new world such were his character and influence that he is worthy to be regarded as one of the founders of our free Republic, though his name does not always appear in the Encyclopaedias. He founded the first Baptist church on Massachusetts soil, and founded a town the most unique in some respects of any of the New England settlements. He died in 1683, and after the lapse of 222 years there was no stone to mark his grave. Indeed the place of his burial was

not positively known, though he "was most probably buried in the old graveyard near where his meeting house and dwelling house stood at Tyler's Point" (Tustin) in the present town of Barrington, R. I.

Through the efforts of Hon. Thomas W. Bicknell, President of the Barrington Historic Antiquarian Society and of the Bristol County Historical Association, a rough boulder was procured and placed in the old cemetery near the supposed place of the grave, and dedicated to Mr. Myles' memory on June 17, 1905. Appropriate services were held first in the Town Hall in Barrington, and then in the cemetery, both being presided over by Mr. Bicknell. The services in the Hall consisted of a brief address by the President, prayer by Rev. G. E. Morse, minister of the John Myles Baptist church in North Swansea, Mass., the Historical Address by Rev. Henry M. King, D. D., minister of the First Baptist church in Providence, a brief address by Rev. H. W. Watjen, minister of the Baptist church in Warren, R. I., a poem by Rev. M. L. Williston, minister of the Congregational church in

Barrington, and appropriate musical selections by a chorus under the leadership of Mr. F. S. Martin of Warren. These included the singing of the "Swansea Song," written by Hezekiah Butterworth. (See appendix J.)

The services at the Cemetery consisted of a Dedicatory Address by Rev. W. H. Eaton, D. D., Secretary of the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society (see appendix J), a poem written by Miss Imogene C. Eaton of East Providence and addresses by Mr. Hezekiah Butterworth of Boston and by ex-Governor John W. Davis of Pawtucket, R. I., both of them descendants of the first settlers. Gen. Nelson A. Miles, a lineal descendant of Rev. John Myles, was expected to be present, but was compelled to send a letter of regret. The day was beautiful, the attendance from Barrington, Providence and adjacent towns large, and the services of great interest throughout.

H. M. K.

First Baptist Parsonage,
December, 1905.

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REV. JOHN MYLES
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By a remarkable reaction in public sentiment the English people who had beheaded Charles I on the afternoon of January 30, 1649, being unable to endure longer his oppressive and tyrannical usurpation of power, were ready almost with one consent, when Cromwell died, to re-establish the throne and welcome a king. For nearly ten years they had enjoyed under the Protectorate an unusual measure of liberty and religious toleration.

It is true that the government of the Great Commoner was never wholly acceptable to the people, and became, as it progressed, increasingly unpopular. The people became more and more dissatisfied, and hoped to find stability and rest by a return to royalty and the

reinstatement of the Stuart line, under which they were encouraged to believe they might preserve the liberties which they had enjoyed for a brief time.

It has been truly said by a recent student of the period: "Cromwell did not himself hold the highest conceptions on the subject (of religious liberty), but he put in practice the views he did hold. By him the leading sects were all tolerated. The nation was ready for no such freedom, but the people were forced to concede each other's rights. The English government was as little representative as at any period in his history. Yet this short specimen of limited toleration (for such it was) led many men to see its desirability. The nation went back heartily to the domination of overbearing kings, but never quite forgot the days of Cromwellian freedom."*

It is the old and oft repeated story of human history, the people longing for "the leeks and the onions and the garlic" of a bondage from which they had escaped, and needing the

*Wallace St. John—"The Contest for liberty of Conscience in England," p. 82.

painful discipline of forty years of wandering in the wilderness before they were ready to enter the land of promise. The leaders of the Reformation, Luther, Zwingli, Melancthon, shrank back from the full emancipation, of which at first they fondly dreamed, and though accomplishing much, allowed themselves to be satisfied with half a victory. Our Puritan fathers, heroic men, fled into exile that they might enjoy personal freedom, at the same time putting straight jackets on some of their own number, and driving into a new exile those who came to help them on to a full and glorious liberty. The great founders of our Republic, boldly declaring their sublime faith that all men "are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, that to secure these rights governments are established among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed," a declaration of principles unsurpassed since the utterance of the immortal Sermon on the Mount, yet allowed to remain, like a festering sore in

the body politic, a system of human slavery unnatural, utterly inconsistent with their declaration of principles, and more cruel than that which the ancient Hebrews either practiced or endured, and whose abscission came near exhausting the wealth and the life-blood of the nation. So inconsistent is the life of men and of nations; so slow is the progress of society and human government, its movements being not only checked and retarded, but often reversed and turned backward; so necessary is it that men should be educated by painful processes before they are ready to choose, and fit to enjoy, the full blessings of "liberty, equality and fraternity."

This is the astonishing fact, that the English people in the middle of the seventeenth century beheaded Charles I, and in ten years invited his son, Charles II, to return from the continent, where he was living in exile, and take the throne and the sceptre, which they had wrested from the father.

To be sure, the dissenting bodies of Christians sent to him before he left the continent, their representatives, hoping to secure his

promised protection of their rights and privileges, when he should become king. The Presbyterians who had found Cromwell a little too tolerant to meet their wishes, hoped to bring about through the new king a recognition of their Church as the National Church. This was their conception of religious liberty. The Baptists formulated their propositions, asking for themselves and for all men, as they had always done, full liberty of conscience, and sent them signed by ten representative men to the claimant of the throne. Their fundamental principle and urgent request found expression in the following respectful and ringing words—

“Forasmuch as it cannot be denied but that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by his death and resurrection, has purchased the liberties of his own people, and is thereby become their sole Lord and King, to whom, and to whom only, they owe obedience in things spiritual; we do therefore humbly beseech your majesty, that you would engage your royal word never to erect, or suffer to be erected, any such tyrannical, popish and anti-

Christian hierarchy (Episcopal, Presbyterian, or by what name soever it may be called) as shall assume a power or impose a yoke upon the consciences of others; but that every one of your majesty's subjects may hereafter be left at liberty to worship God in such a way, form, and manner, as shall appear to them to be agreeable to the mind and will of Christ, revealed in his Word, according to that proportion or measure of faith and knowledge which they have received."

That was a characteristic utterance of Baptists at that early date, demanding not toleration, but full religious liberty for all men. Other religious bodies made their appeals according to their conceptions of toleration. The king treated their approaches in a conciliatory and crafty manner, and on May 29, 1660, the thirtieth anniversary of his birth, Charles II was welcomed back to England with genuine public rejoicings.

"He kept the word of promise to their ear,
And broke it to their hope."

The dissenting bodies were doomed to bitter disappointment. In 1661 the Savoy Con-

ference was called together, which was an attempt to formulate and prescribe a national creed. In 1662 the intolerable Act of Uniformity was passed which compelled every clergyman of every name, on or before Aug. 24th, St. Bartholomew's Day, to assent *in toto* to the Book of Common Prayer, under penalty of losing his benefice, and compelled every occupant of a benefice to receive a bishop's ordination. On June 14, 1662, Sir Henry Vane was beheaded on Tower Hill. He had been in New England long enough to be the liberal Governor of the Massachusetts Bay (1635 to 1637). He was the firm friend of Roger Williams, which is only another way of saying that he was the firm friend of liberty. In the same year the Corporation Act was passed, which required every office-holder in a municipal corporation to take an oath of non-resistance to the crown, and to receive the sacrament according to the rights of the Church of England, an Act aimed against dissenters to keep them out of office, municipal and parliamentary. In 1664 the Conventicle Act was passed, imposing severe fines

upon all persons attending meetings for worship, outside the established Church, five persons above those residing in the place constituting an unlawful assembly. And in 1665 the Five Mile Act was passed, prohibiting ministers who had been expelled, from settling within five miles of any town, and from teaching publicly or privately, till they had first subscribed to the Act of Uniformity, and taken the oath of non-resistance to the crown. Charles II was a Roman Catholic, and it is said "made several attempts to grant toleration to his co-religionists, but he always gave way when the anti-popish passion seized the people." During this reign of terror it is said that more than eight thousand persons were sent to prison, many were reduced to poverty, and not a few lost their lives.

Such was the condition of things in England in the sixties of the seventeenth century, a condition repressive of all freedom of conduct, of speech, of faith, of conscience and almost of thought. Of the government under Charles II, Macaulay says in caustic language, "It had just ability enough to deceive, and

just religion enough to persecute." The Act of Uniformity of 1662 dispossessed of their parishes, it is said, two thousand ministers, who had been appointed by Cromwell. Presbyterians, Independents and Baptists alike suffered ejectment. Then came a fresh deportation of "sifted wheat" to the shores of New England.*

Among those who were driven out by the cruel Act of Uniformity was Rev. John Myles (often now spelled Miles) the pastor of a Baptist church in Ilston, in Swansea, Wales. Of his early life we know comparatively little. He is reported to have been born at Newton, in Herefordshire, about 1621, and to have matriculated at Brasenose College, Oxford, March 11th, 1636. "He sprang from a region whose soil had been enriched by the blood of martyrs in medieval and later times." When the young man reached his majority there seemed, however, to be few traces of primi-

*"That 'shameless act of perfidy,' as a Scotch historian styles the act of uniformity, deprived two thousand Presbyterian usurpers of their livings in the Church of England; while, during the reign of dissent in that fair island, full seven thousand of the established clergy were 'imprisoned, banished, and sent a starving.'" Oliver "The Puritan Commonwealth," p. 367.

tive, spiritual religion remaining in his country. Another has said—"The destitution of gospel privileges in Wales about 1641 was truly appalling. Evangelical preachers had been hunted out by the Laudian inquisition, and the great majority of the ministers of the established Church were ignorant and corrupt." In that year a petition was sent to the King and Parliament by some distressed souls, stating that "after minutely searching, scarcely were there found as many conscientious, settled preachers in Wales as there were counties in it." Mr. Myles not only occupied a benefice under appointment of Cromwell, but his name appears as one of the "testers" (or triers) appointed under the "Act for the Better Propagation of the Gospel in Wales," signed February 22, 1649, which had for its purpose the sifting out of corrupt and worthless ministers, and the furnishing of a better class for the Principality. This reveals the excellent character of the man, and the confidence which Cromwell had in his spirituality and good judgment.

Somewhere about 1645 Mr. Myles entered

upon a new spiritual life, which was to be a life of successful service in the Christian ministry on both sides of the Atlantic. He and a companion, Mr. Thomas Proud, went up to London, where they had opportunity to follow the new light which had come to them, and were baptised into the Baptist Church in Broad street, then in charge of William Consett and Edward Draper. The Londoners believed that the coming of these Welsh brethren was a direct and immediate answer to prayer, for they had just spent a day in earnest supplication before God, driven by a sense of the spiritual need which they saw all about them, "that He would send laborers into the dark corners of the land."

Mr. Myles on returning to Wales gave himself unreservedly to the work of preaching the gospel, and with such marked success that on Oct. 1, 1649, a Baptist church was organized at Ilston, of which he became the pastor. According to the records which have been preserved, this was the first Baptist church in Wales. The following paragraph is taken from the records:

“We cannot but admire at the unsearchable wisdom, power and love of God, in bringing about his own designs, far above and beyond the capacity and understanding of the wisest of men. Thus, to the glory of his own great name, hath He dealt with us; for when there had been no company or society of people, holding forth and professing the doctrine, worship, order and discipline of the gospel, according to the primitive institution, that ever we heard of in all Wales, since the apostacy, it pleased the Lord to choose this dark corner to place his name in, and honor us, undeserving creatures, with the happiness of being the first in all these parts, among whom was practiced the glorious ordinance of baptism, and here to gather the first church of baptised believers.”

If it shall be found that Mr. Myles was instrumental in founding the first Baptist church in the Swansea of the new world, a double honor rests upon the head of this ancient preacher of truth and righteousness. Eight months before the church at Ilston was organized Charles I lost his head. It was in the

atmosphere of a new and welcome toleration that religious activities were greatly multiplied, the fear of civil and ecclesiastical penalties was removed, and large spiritual results were secured. At the end of the second year the little church in Ilston numbered fifty-five members. Forty were added in 1651, and forty-seven in 1652. In eleven years two hundred and sixty-three persons had been added to the church-roll, all of whom are named in the records of the church, making it a large church for that period. Moreover several other churches had sprung into existence in that section. In all this activity and progress Mr. Myles was an active agent, and an acknowledged leader. In 1651 he was chosen to represent the Welsh Baptists at the ministers' meeting in London. But the accession of Charles II to the throne brought disaster to this brief prosperity, sent fear and consternation throughout the realm, made the land unendurable for lovers of soul-liberty, and separated in thousands of instances pastors and people. Not a few of these pastors sought refuge and a larger freedom in this new world.

Mr. Myles was one of a group of intelligent and sturdy Welsh Baptists who migrated to America, and were greatly useful in laying the foundations of their denomination in this country, being characterized by a profound reverence for the Word of God and a clear apprehension of its truths, by a love for education, and an intense passion for liberty and the rights of conscience. Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia and other sections were all under immense obligation to this Welsh influence. Roger Williams (if he was a Welshman),* John Myles, Samuel Jones, Isaac Eaton, Thomas Griffith, Evan Morgan, Abel Morgan, Morgan Edwards, Morgan John Rhys, David Thomas, David Jones, John Williams and others, all of them worthy compatriots of

*Mr. Henry F. Waters of Salem, Mass., a distinguished genealogist, published in 1889 the results of his careful research as to the birthplace of Roger Williams, in which he disputed the traditional and universally accepted belief that he was born in the town of Gwinear in Wales, and maintained that he was a native of London. So strong was the argument which he presented that many persons have regarded it as conclusive. There are some historians, however, who still hold to the traditional belief, and the Welsh Baptists still claim Roger Williams as theirs. It is doubtful if there will ever be absolute unanimity of opinion.

Vavator Powell of the seventeenth century, and Christmas Evans of the eighteenth, both of whom fulfilled a powerful ministry in their native land, exerted an incalculable influence upon American Baptists, and it may be said, upon the religious, educational and political life of this Republic. Brown University owes its existence to the initiative of these Welsh Baptists.”*

It is a matter of history that some portion of Mr. Myles’ church at Ilston emigrated with him to this country, and settled in Rehoboth. How large a portion, it is impossible to ascertain, certainly not the whole church, as is sometimes represented, and probably a very small portion of it. For as I have been recently informed by a clergyman from Wales,

*“The preponderance of the Welsh element in the early history of the Philadelphia Association, and especially of our own church, is worthy of note. Of the first six joint pastors of Pennepek and Philadelphia, three—Samuel Jones and both the Morgans—were Welshmen, to whom are to be added their immediate successors, Jenkin Jones and Morgan Edwards. Their force of character counted for far more than their mere numbers. To this fact is due the sturdy Calvinistic faith, which was characteristic not only of our own, but of nearly all the churches of the Philadelphia Association. Even as late as February 14, 1831, separate services in the Welsh language were held in our church.” “Historical address at the Bicentennial of the First Baptist Church in Philadelphia” by William W. Keen, p. 54.

well acquainted with the history of the Welsh Baptists, a church still exists in old Swansea, which dates its origin back to 1649, and claims to have maintained an unbroken continuity of life since that time.

It was in 1663 that Mr. Myles and his little company of devoted followers came to this country, forty-three years after the Mayflower crossed the Atlantic, and thirty-two years after the arrival of Roger Williams. Whether this company was large or small, the pastor brought the church records with him, written of course in the Welsh tongue. This fact has given rise undoubtedly to the prevalent belief that the church was transplanted bodily. Very fortunately those records, going back to 1649, have been preserved, having been translated by some unknown hand, and are still in the possession of the American Swansea Baptist church, and in good condition. It is interesting to know that the first Baptist church in Pennsylvania, called the Pennepek or Lower Dublin church, kept its records in the Welsh language for many years, and of course conducted its worship in that tongue, and that

the first Baptist church in Delaware was a Welsh church, and came bodily from Wales.

It was in the town of Rehoboth, within the limits of Plymouth Colony, that Mr. Myles decided to make a home for himself and his company, guided undoubtedly by his knowledge that the spirit of this Colony was more tolerant and hospitable than that of the Massachusetts Bay.*

The reputation of the Puritans for religious intolerance and cruel persecution, which had been manifested again and again in formal legislation and open acts of violence, was well known on the other side of the Atlantic. John and Samuel Brown had been compelled to return to England because they were guilty of the crime of non-conformity, being unwilling

*Edgar D. Perry in an address at the "Two Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the Settlement of Rehoboth," says Myles first undertook a settlement at Hingham. Goodwin in "Pilgrim Republic" speaks of the attempt being made at Dorchester.

At that time Rehoboth was claimed by the Plymouth Colony. Subsequently it passed under the jurisdiction of the Massachusetts Bay with all the Plymouth territory. The dividing line between Massachusetts and Rhode Island was long a matter of dispute. Says Edward Field in "State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations at the End of the Century," Vol. I. 190: "The Plymouth Council, by letters patent of 1629, granted to Bradford and his associates territory as far as Narragansett River, but this grant conveyed

to renounce the book of Common Prayer, and offer their worship to God in the prescribed Puritan method. Roger Williams had been banished, and his presence in England seven years afterwards, as a distinguished exile, driven out into the wilderness by Puritan authority, must have produced a wide and profound impression among the Baptists of the mother country. Obadiah Holmes, who with his two Baptist companions from Newport, Dr. John Clarke and John Crandall, had been arrested at Lynn for holding religious service in the home of an aged brother, to whom

only right of estate, and not of jurisdiction. The first royal grant of the territory was in the Rhode Island charter of 1663, when the colony was given land extending 'three English miles to the east and north-east of the most eastern and northeastern parts of Narragansett Bay.' In 1691 Plymouth was absorbed in the Massachusetts charter, and henceforth the dispute was held with the latter government."

In 1733 Rhode Island petitioned to the King for a settlement, claiming territory according to the three mile clause in her charter. Massachusetts put in a counter claim for all territory as far as Narragansett Bay, based on the Plymouth grant. The Privy Council finally referred the matter to a Board of Commissioners, chosen from New York, New Jersey and Nova Scotia. They met in Providence June 30, 1741, and decided mainly in favor of the Rhode Island claim, giving to that colony Barrington, Warren and Bristol, and also Tiverton and Little Compton. Massachusetts appealed from the decision. In May, 1746, the Council ordered that the award of the Commissioners be confirmed. Massachusetts still objected, and refused to have anything to do with surveying the boundary line. Rhode Island did it unaided, leaving disputes which continued for a century.

they were paying a visit of Christian sympathy, had been whipped unmercifully on Boston Common, Clarke and Crandall being imprisoned and fined, and the treatment of these worthies by the Puritan authorities had called forth a severe remonstrance from Richard Saltonstall, who had been previously a Puritan magistrate, and was then on a visit to England.

“It doth not a little grieve my spirit to hear what sad things are reported daily of your tyranny and persecutions in New England as that you fine, whip and imprison men for their consciences.”

These things were well known. Surely to leave old England, even under the reign of Charles II for that section of New England would have been to jump out of the frying pan into the fire.

But even within the limits of the Plymouth Colony, notwithstanding the reputation the Pilgrims had of possessing a better spirit, which indeed they justly deserved, Mr. Myles did not find the free air and the bright sunshine of an unrestricted liberty, which he may

have expected, nor was his bed always a bed of fragrant roses. He was compelled even here, at first, to feel the sharp thorn of persecution. Fourteen years before his arrival, in 1649, the year in which Charles I was beheaded, and also the year in which Mr. Myles founded the first Baptist church in Wales, there had been a division in the church of the standing order in Rehoboth, of which Rev. Samuel Newman was pastor. Obadiah Holmes (to whom reference has already been made as being whipped by the authorities in Boston, but who in his exalted martyr-spirit rose heroically above the pain of the bloody lashes, and declared to the executioner, "You have struck me as with roses") with several other members of the church took exception to the doctrine and the domineering methods of the pastor, withdrew from the meetings of the church and organized meetings of their own. Shortly after they were immersed by Dr. John Clarke and Mark Lucar of Newport.* Some writers speak of this step at

*Dr. John Clarke was one of the founders of Aquidneck (Newport) in 1638. He was a learned physician as well as pastor of the first church established

Rehoboth as a new church organization, which would place the date of the origin of the first Baptist church in Massachusetts thirteen or fourteen years before the coming of Mr. Myles. But though the form of church organization in those days was very simple, it is doubtful if these Baptists did more than hold meetings by themselves for mutual comfort and edification. They were of course excommunicated from Mr. Newman's church, and Mr. Holmes and two of his associates were cited to appear before the Plymouth Court, four petitions or papers of accusation having been lodged against them, one from the neighboring church in Taunton, one from all the ministers in Plymouth Colony except two, one from thirty-five citizens of Rehoboth, members of Mr. Newman's church, and a fourth from what Benedict calls "the meddling Court at Boston, under their Secretary's hand, urging the Plymouth rulers speedily to suppress this growing schism."

there, which was undoubtedly a Congregational church. After a few years he changed his religious views, and assisted in organizing a Baptist church, becoming its first pastor. Mark Lucar had recently come from London, where he had been a member of a Baptist church.

The Puritan rulers undoubtedly instigated the whole proceeding, as they frequently manifested a lively sense of responsibility for the consciences and conduct of their neighbors.

They had interfered with the rights of the Salem church in accepting Roger Williams as their pastor and desiring to retain him, and gave them no peace until he was driven out. In 1642 Governor Bellingham wrote to the Plymouth Governor, urging the latter to "consider and advise with us how we may avoid those who are secretly sowing the seed of familism and anabaptism." In 1646 the Confederate Commissioners urged upon each General Court that "a due watch be kept and continued at the door of God's house that anabaptism, familism and all errors of like nature may be seasonably and duly suppressed." Later the Puritan authorities had even presumed to reprimand the men of Providence for harboring the Quakers within their borders, and protested against the exercise of such hospitality. So now the Massachusetts Court addressed the Court at Ply-

mouth in such words as these—"We have heard heretofore of diverse Anabaptists arisen up in your jurisdiction and connived at; but being but few we well hoped that it might have pleased God, by the endeavors of yourselves and the faithful elders with you, to have reduced such erring men again into the right way. But now to our great grief we are credibly informed that your patient bearing with such men hath produced another effect, namely, the multiplying and increasing of the same errors, and we fear may be of other errors also, if timely care be not taken to suppress the same. Particularly we understand that within this few weeks there have been at Seekonk thirteen or fourteen rebaptized (a swift progress in one town), yet we hear not if any effectual restriction is intended thereabouts."

The Plymouth magistrates, however, did nothing but charge the accused to abstain from practices offensive to others, and bound them over, the one for the other, in the sum of ten pounds, for their future appearance at the court. At the October Court of that

year (1650) the Grand Jury found a bill against nine persons, five men and four women, viz.: John Hazel*, Edward Smith and wife, Obadiah Holmes, Joseph Tory and wife, the wife of James Mann, and William Buell and wife. The crime with which they were charged was the continuing to hold meetings on the Lord's day from house to house in defiance of the order of the Court. There is, however, no record of any sentence being executed upon them. The bark of the Plymouth magistrates seems generally to have so far exhausted their strength and satisfied their desire that they had little strength or disposition to do much biting. They barked loudly when commanded by their Puritan neighbors, but their bite was of a milder type than the Bay approved.

Soon after this public arraignment of this little Baptist group, Obadiah Holmes and some of his companions fled to Newport for

*John Hazel traveled all the way to Boston through the wilderness the next year, though upward of sixty years of age, to visit Holmes in prison, and for expressing sympathy with him at the time of his whipping, was himself fined and imprisoned, and died from the effects of his imprisonment. He has been called "the first martyr to Baptist principles in America."

residence to escape further annoyance, and enjoy the blessings of unrestricted liberty. It was only nine months after that Mr. Holmes made his visit of Christian sympathy to a Baptist brother in Lynn, which terminated so painfully, the Puritan magistrates making full amends for the leniency of the Plymouth rulers by the severity of the punishment which they inflicted upon the criminal now that he was in their power.

A few, however, of these early Baptist dissenters appear to have remained in Rehoboth, quietly holding their beliefs, and waiting for the favorable opportunity to avow them openly. They were compelled to wait thirteen years. The opportunity came in 1663, at the coming of John Myles with his Welsh Baptists.

The meeting for church organization and the declaration of fellowship was held in the house of John Butterworth. Seven persons, whose names are given in the records, then and there entered into solemn covenant to walk together in the truth and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ, as they understood

them, amenable to no human authority outside of themselves, ecclesiastical or civil, recognizing only the Lordship of Him, who is Head over all things to his Church. (See Appendix A.) The names of the constituent members are as follows: John Myles, James Brown, Nicholas Tanner, Joseph Carpenter, John Butterworth, Eldad Kingsley and Benjamin Alby. All these men were men of sterling character and clear convictions, and a worthy posterity honors and reveres their memory. James Brown came of especially good stock, as is well known. His father, John Brown, had been for many years a citizen of Rehoboth, and was one of the magistrates. He was far advanced in his views of religious liberty long before the organization of the church. In 1655 it is reported that he expressed before the Court his conscientious scruples against taxing all the inhabitants for the support of religion, and generously offered himself to pay the taxes of all his townsmen, who refused for conscience sake. It will be noticed that the names of the sisters are not given with the names of the brethren; yet

there were undoubtedly wives and mothers who formed an active and influential part of that church organization. Whoever heard of a good thing starting in this world, in which consecrated women did not have a hand? The world has long given to woman ample credit for the introduction of evil; it is time she had her proper recognition in all movements for the moral and religious progress of the world, and its restoration to its lost fellowship with God. Her name may be omitted in the earthly records, but it will stand high in the records of Heaven.*

So far as appears from any accessible sources of information, only one of these

*It may have been customary to omit the names of female members in such formal action as entering into church covenant. When in 1682, in Kittery, Me., a few Baptists under the leadership of William Screven, organized what was the first Baptist church in the District of Maine (in a few months it was transferred by reason of persecution to Charleston, S. C.) the covenant was signed by the male members only. It is known that several women had been recently baptized there, including the wife and mother-in-law of Mr. Screven, yet their names do not appear, attached to the covenant. After the record of the covenant and the signatures of ten brethren, the following attestation is recorded: "This is a true copy compared with the original and owned by all our brethren and seven sisters, as attest

Wm. Screven in
behalf of the rest."

See "Hist. of Baptists in Maine," pp. 20-23, by Rev. H. S. Burrage also "Hist. of First Baptist Church in Boston," pp. 179-182, by Rev. N. E. Wood.

seven brethren, Nicholas Tanner, accompanied Mr. Myles in his migration from Wales. As we do not know how many companions he had on his journey to this new world, so we do not know what became of them after their arrival. Backus says: "Nicholas Tanner, Obadiah Bowen, John Thomas and others also came over to this country (that is, with Mr. Myles) and one of Bowen's posterity is now Chancellor of the University at Providence." The first Chancellor of Brown University was Stephen Hopkins, LL. D. (1764-1785), and the second Chancellor was Jabez Bowen, LL. D. (1785-1815.) It is possible that some of the Welsh immigrants were detained for good reasons from that first meeting for organization, who subsequently came into the fellowship. It seems as if the little church organized itself about the strong personality of the pastor, and the imported church records.

This church was the fifth Baptist church in America. (See Appendix I.) The church in Providence, founded by Roger Williams, had

had an existence for twenty-five years.* The traditional date of the origin of the first church in Newport, founded by Dr. John Clarke upon the remains of a Congregational Church, is 1644. About the year 1652 there was a division in the Providence Church, which led to the formation of a second church under the leadership of Thomas Olney. This church ceased to exist in 1718, after the pastorates of Mr. Olney and his son, Thomas, Jr. In the year 1656 there was a division in the church in Newport, and a Six Principle Baptist church was formed, which still exists (now called the Second Baptist church), and is in full fellowship with regular Baptist churches.

At the first, the little church in Rehoboth appears to have enjoyed a measure of peace, and to have been permitted without violent opposition to worship God "under its own vine and fig tree," though not without many misgivings, heart-burnings and generous attempts to reclaim its members from the er-

*For an attempt to found a Baptist church in Weymouth in 1639 and an account of its supposed author, Hanserd Knollys, see Appendix G.

ror of their ways, on the part of the Standing Order. Dr. Mather, speaking of them, says: "There being many good men among those, I do not know that they have been persecuted with any harder means than those of kind conferences to reclaim them." Such generous interest seems to have been unappreciated and unsuccessful. Rev. Samuel Newman, the established pastor of the town, died the year of Mr. Myles' arrival. Whether the loss of his conscientious and active guardianship over the religious faiths of the people had anything to do with the temporary cessation of hostility against the new movement, we may not say. The cessation, however, was only temporary. Four years afterwards we find this record:

"At the Court holden at Plymouth the 2d of July, 1667, before Thomas Prince, Governor (seven assistants are also mentioned, including John Alden and William Bradford)

* * * * * Mr. Myles and Mr. Brown, for their breach of order, in setting up of a public meeting without the knowledge and approbation of the Court to the disturbance of

the peace of the place, are fined each of them five pounds, and Mr. Tanner the sum of one pound, and we judge that their continuance at Rehoboth, being very prejudicial to the peace of that church and that town, may not be allowed, and do therefore order all persons concerned therein wholly to desist from the said meeting in that place or township, within this month. Yet in case they shall remove their meeting into some other place, where they may not prejudice any other church, and shall give us any reasonable satisfaction respecting their principles, we know not but they may be permitted by this government so to do.”* Which being interpreted is—Stop your meetings for worship or get out, or rather, if you conclude to move to some other place, such as we may approve, and shall satisfy us as to your views and intentions, we may permit you to go. This seems to be a rather peculiar form of banishment. What

*Goodwin makes the astonishing asertion: “There was in this no persecution because of religious belief, for the penalty was only that which would have been laid on the most orthodox of Congregationalists who had in like manner established a new and poor church in an existing parish.” “The Pilgrim Republic,” p 523.

was the occasion of this new outbreak we do not know. Baylies strangely suggests that "neither the designs nor characters of Myles and his church were understood at this time."

But Mr. Myles had lived among them for four years, and held meetings, and preached, and gathered members to his flock. In May, 1666, he was "received an inhabitant among them," that is, into full citizenship, as Mr. Tanner, his Welsh member, had been in April of that year. Moreover on April 13 of that year, he was voted by the town "to be a lecturer, viz., to preach once a fortnight on the week day, once on the Sabbath day," to assist the pastor of the established church, Rev. Zachariah Symmes, who was in feeble health. Again on August 13, it was voted "that Mr. Myles shall still continue a lecturer on the week day, and further on the Sabbath." This was of course a temporary arrangement, until some one of their own communion could be found, yet was an expression of great liberality. Moreover, Baptists had lived among them for eighteen years, and had not been altogether unknown or ignored by the Honorable Court.

But whatever may have been the occasion of this fresh exhibition of hostility and persecution, it proved to be the last one. Indeed it may be said that again the bark of the Plymouth Court was worse than its bite, for in less than four months from this decision of the authorities (Oct. 30, 1667) an amicable arrangement was entered into, whereby a portion of territory lying adjacent to Rehoboth, called Wannamoisett, was set apart for the occupation of the Baptists, and such persons as might wish to join them; for such had been the conduct and spirit of the Baptists that they had won the confidence and friendship of not a few of their neighbors and fellow citizens. This new town was named Swansea, after the Welsh town from which Mr. Myles had come. (See Appendix B.) This was the habit of many of the New England settlers, to give to the new homes the names of their places of residence in the "Old Home." This territory has since been divided into the towns of Swansea, Somerset, Warren and Barrington, the last two being now included in Rhode Island. This settlement was supposed by the Ply-

mouth magistrates evidently to be sufficiently removed from Rehoboth not to be "prejudicial to the peace of that church and town," and was undoubtedly acceptable to the Baptists, for it required no great journey, and they would still be near the Baptist settlements in Providence and Newport. It seems that the name "Rehoboth," which means "The Lord hath made room for his beloved," was not quite applicable to the town which bore it. It should have signified "The Lord hath made room for some of his beloved."

If the description of the town given by Rev. Samuel Peters, LL. D., in his "Life of Rev. Hugh Peters," in which he strangely confounds Rev. Samuel Newman, who prepared a Concordance to the Bible, with the famous Alexander Cruden, the author of "Cruden's Concordance," was accurate, the town could hardly be regarded as an attractive place of residence at that time. This distinguished divine says: "It also was a frontier against the Pequod Indians, at the head of a creek emptying into Narragansett bay, where were plenty of fish and oysters, on which the set-

tlers might live and protect Boston, if the Indians did not scalp them. This pious clergyman (Mr. Newman) with his pious companions, not knowing their danger, went and formed the settlement of Rehoboth; the scite being pleasant, the air salubrious, and the prospect horrible."

In the new town of Swansea set apart for this Baptist colony (an example which was followed in the early history of Western Massachusetts, only there the boundary lines were very irregularly drawn, so as to include the existing homesteads of all Baptist families)* the little church found its permanent home, and through the vicissitudes of two hundred and forty-two years has, by the protecting grace of God, continued to this day. They built their first meeting-house about three miles northeast of Warren, and a second one in 1679 near Kelley's Bridge, and also a par-

*The town of Cheshire in Massachusetts was originally settled by Baptists from Swansea, Warwick, Newport and Providence, R. I., and was at first called New Providence. It was taken in part from the town of Adams and in part from the town of Lanesboro, and was set apart for Baptist occupation, the boundary line being very irregular. (See "Historical Sketch of Baptist Beginnings in Berkshire," by Rev. W. H. Eaton, D. D.

sonage for their minister. Both meeting house and parsonage were erected by vote of the town.

Among the men intimately associated with Mr. Myles in the founding of the town was Captain Thomas Willett. They two are called "the fathers of the town."* Captain Willett's wife was a sister of James Brown, who was one of the constituent members of the church, but Mr. Willett was not a Baptist, and he represented a considerable party who were not members of the church, and yet were prominent in the management of town affairs. In the records of the Court of New Plymouth for 1667, we find this action taken—"The Court hath appointed Capt. Thomas Willett, Mr. Paine, Sen., Mr. Brown, Mr. John Allen and John Butterworth, to have the trust of admit-

*Captain Willett was a man of strong character, and an acknowledged leader wherever he was. He was one of the last of the Leyden company who came to Plymouth. In 1647 he became the successor of Captain Miles Standish in the command of the militia of Plymouth, and for a long period of years was elected one of the Governor's assistants. At a later period of his life he removed to New York, and became the first English Mayor after its cession from the Dutch. Returning to that part of Swansea, which is now Barrington, he died Aug. 4, 1674, before the breaking out of King Philip's war. His daughter, Sarah, married Rev. John Eliot, the apostle to the Indians.

tance of town inhabitants in said town, and to have the disposal of the land therein, and ordering the other affairs of said town. The Court do allow and approve that the township granted unto Capt. Thomas Willett, and others, his neighbors, at Wannamoisett, and parts adjacent, shall henceforth be called and known by the name of Swansea."

Mr. Paine as well as Captain Willett was a Pedobaptist. This official authorization of trustees to determine the terms of admission to citizenship led to a unique condition of things, not consonant with the principles of full, unrestricted religious liberty.

It is said that Captain Willett, shortly after the grant of territory, made the following propositions to his associates:

"1. That no erroneous person be admitted into the township, either as an inhabitant or a sojourner.

2. That no man of any evil behaviour as contentious persons, &c., be admitted.

3. That none may be admitted who may become a charge to the place."

These propositions were presented to the church, and a reply defining with great particularity the church's understanding of them was formulated and returned to Capt. Willett, officially signed "in behalf and in the name of the church meeting at Swansea" by John Myles, pastor, and John Butterworth. (See Appendix C, also Appendix D). This reply while admitting to citizenship all those who held different views from those entertained by the members of the church on the mode and the proper subjects of baptism, discriminated positively against all Roman Catholics, and all persons denying evangelical views which are enumerated at length, and "holding damnable heresies inconsistent with the faith of the gospel," Anglicans, Lutherans, Socinians, Sabbatarians, Quakers and some others. "It is evident," says the editor of Backus' History, "that this ancient Baptist church was not, at first, clear in the view that civil government has no right of interference with religious belief, and that it took upon itself the dangerous task of deciding between Christian doctrines as more or less essential." And Prof. A. H. Newman

says: "Here we see a result of Myles' training in connection with the state-church system of the Commonwealth and the Protectorate. He had failed to grasp the great principle of absolute liberty of conscience which the mass of Antipedobaptists from the reformation time onward had consistently advocated and practiced."*

The Baptist interpretation of religion, that it is a matter between the individual soul and God, and that the soul in religious matters is amenable to no human authority, civil or ecclesiastical, wherever it has been truly held, has always had for its corollary the sublime

*See also Goodwin's "Pilgrim Republic," p. 524.—Hon. George F. Hoar delivered the oration at the 275th anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims, Dec. 21, 1895. In extenuation of their failure to make a practical application of the principles of civil and religious liberty, he cited other illustrations of intolerance at that time, saying among other things: "Some of our Baptist friends wanted the term 'damnable heretics' to include Unitarians and to have them banished." This reference, as he privately confessed, was to the church in Swansea and its action upon Captain Willett's proposals. While it is true that these Swansea Baptists did not propose to "banish" any one, they did consent to restrict the privileges of citizenship among them. But Senator Hoar should have remembered and acknowledged that in this respect they did not occupy the position, or reflect the sentiments, of the Baptists of their time in Providence, Newport and Boston. His statement would have been more just, if he had particularized his reference, and asserted its wholly exceptional character.

doctrine of soul-liberty. Mr. Myles, who undoubtedly drew up the reply to Capt. Willett's propositions, though facing in the right direction, had not yet fully arrived. He needed to take a few lessons of Roger Williams and John Clarke. Though this reply seems like a declaration of principles, it should be said that there is no evidence that Swansea ever in a single instance carried out its religious restrictions against new comers. Pastor and people undoubtedly soon fell into line with Providence, and Newport, and Boston, and joined hands with them in the struggle which was then waging, for the separation of church and state, and did not reach its complete victory even in New England till more than a century and a half later.*

It would be interesting, did time permit, to trace in detail the fortunes of the little church and community during the stormy times that soon followed in King Philip's war, and also to sketch the useful career of this brave man

*It was not until the year 1833 that Massachusetts erased from its statute books the last trace of oppressive religious legislation, and declared itself in favor of full religious liberty. See "New England's Struggles for Religious Liberty," p. 247 sq., by Rev. David B. Ford, D. D.

of God, who escaped the persecutions of the old world to suffer some persecution and much hardness, for the sake of truth and conscience, in the wilderness of the new world. The parish was a large one, and he was its only minister, some of his parishioners travelling five or six miles to enjoy his ministry, and all, whether Baptists or not, joining in his support. "Pastor's lots" were set apart for his use. (See Appendix E.) A school was established by vote of the town in 1673 "for the teaching of grammar, rhetoric, and arithmetic, and the tongues of Latin, Greek and Hebrew, also to read English and to write." Mr. Myles was chosen schoolmaster for the town. He must have been competent by reason of his University training to teach these languages, but it is doubtful if a heavy demand was made upon his services in this direction. Very likely these languages were what would be denominated in modern times "electives" and not "required studies." In fulfilling his twofold office it was his custom to go from one section of the town to another with his Bible and schoolbooks in his saddle bags. He has been called "the Pestalozzi of America."

His appointment as schoolmaster seems to have been a life tenure and to have been transferrible. "It was voted and ordered * * * that a salary of £40 per annum in current country pay, which passeth from man to man, be duly paid from time to time, and at all times hereafter to the schoolmaster thereof, and that Mr. John Myles, the present pastor of the church here assembling, be the schoolmaster, otherwise to have power to dispose the same to an able schoolmaster, during the said pastor's life, and from and after his decease that the school and salary thereto belonging during their respective natural lives; provided, nevertheless, that the said school and forty pounds salary aforesaid shall be continued to the said John Myles, and to the said successive pastors for and during such time as he or they, and any or every one of them shall be contented to take their ministerial maintenance by weekly contributions and no longer."

"It is further ordered that said school shall be only free to such children whose parents pay any rates towards the said school, and to none other, and that the schoolmaster and suc-

cessive schoolmasters thereof for the time being shall have liberty to take in any other scholars they think fit, to be educated there, and every scholar at first entrance shall pay twelve pence in silver towards buying of books for the said school."

In the midst of the peace and prosperity of the community, the growth of the church, the provisions for the education of the young, the increasing comfort of the homes, suddenly, in 1675, King Philip's war burst upon the town. An historian says: "Swansea received the first blow in this sanguinary war. Houses were robbed and cattle killed. Four days later the massacre commenced. Nine of the inhabitants were slain and seven wounded." Mr. Myles' house was used as a garrison, and he himself became the brave leader of his little flock in the defence of their firesides. Assistance arriving from neighboring towns, the Indians fled, leaving in their wake mutilated bodies and burning buildings. The families of the parish were scattered, seeking shelter in Providence and Newport. Mr. Myles found his way to Boston, where in 1665, two years

after the Swansea church was formed, a Baptist church had been organized under the leadership of Thomas Goold, who was a friend of Henry Dunster, the first president of Harvard University, a man who was said to be "a miracle of scholarship," but being compelled to dissent from the scripturalness of infant baptism, or as Cotton Mather said: "having fallen into the briars of antipedobaptism," and being unable to recant, he was ejected from his office.*

President Dunster undoubtedly attended the early conferences of the Baptists in Boston,

*Brooks Adams, in "The Emancipation of Massachusetts," p. 107, says: "Henry Dunster was an uncommon man. Famed for piety in an age of fanaticism, learned, modest, and brave, by the unremitting toil of thirteen years he raised Harvard from a school to the position which it has since held; and though very poor, and starving on a wretched and ill-paid pittance, he gave his beloved college one hundred acres of land at the moment of its sorest need. Yet he was a criminal, for he would not baptize infants, and he met with 'the lenity and patience' (?) which the elders were not unwilling should be used toward the erring. He was indicted and convicted of disturbing church ordinances, and deprived of his office in October, 1654." See also Quincy's "History of Harvard," and "Life of Henry Dunster," by Jeremiah Chaplin, D. D.

Thomas Hollis, a Baptist merchant of London, subsequently endowed professorships in Harvard University and founded scholarships for the benefit of Baptist students, which are still administered by the University. See in Appendix F an illuminating letter from Mr. Hollis to Rev. Ephraim Wheaton, the third pastor of the Swansea church.

and had large influence in the development of their views and their establishment in the truth, but he died before it was deemed prudent, or found possible, openly to effect a church organization. Mr. Myles was acting pastor of the Boston church for fifteen months and more, the first pastor, Thomas Goold, having died Oct. 27, 1675, and his services were so acceptable that he was urged to remain as permanent pastor. His presence in Boston was not acceptable, however, to the Puritan authorities. He was arrested and brought before the Governor's Council, charged with violating the laws by holding unauthorized meetings for worship. After being reprimanded he was let go, inasmuch as he was only a sojourner in the Bay Colony, and expected to return to his loved Swansea so soon as the Indian war should be terminated. After the war was over, the people returned to their desolated homes to lay amid the ashes of their former prosperity the foundations of a new life, domestic, civil, educational and religious.

At a town meeting held May 27, 1678, "John Allen and John Brown were chosen to draw

up a letter in behalf of the church and town, to be sent to Mr. John Myles, pastor of the church and minister of the town, manifesting their desire of his return to them; and Thomas Esterbrooks was chosen to carry the town's letter to Mr. Myles, at Boston." From this action it appears that in this town, on a small scale, church and state were pretty closely allied, if not actually wedded. It was the town that voted to build a new meeting house in the place of the one destroyed by the Indians, and determined its location, and to build also a new house for the pastor, "to indemnify him for debts due him in the time of the Indian war." This civil aid was not unknown in other New England towns, and indicated no right to interfere in church affairs. My Myles gave to the town the following receipt: "Received of the town the full of all debts due to me from said town from the beginning of the world till the 18 of June, 1679."

With the interruption of a visit or two to his brethren in Boston, to whom his visits were always most welcome, and frequent missionary excursions in the neighborhood, Mr. Myles

spent the little remainder of his eventful and laborious life with his Swansea church. He died Feb. 3, 1683, at the early age of 62 years, having spent twenty years in his adopted country. Such was his learning, his piety, his strength of character, his courage of conviction, his conciliatory spirit and his willingness to suffer for conscience and truth, that he commended himself to friends and foes alike.*

Backus speaks of Mr. Myles, writing in 1777, as the learned and pious Mr. Myles * * * * whose memory is still precious among us." Cotton Mather associates him with that eminent Baptist, who was in this country but a short time, viz.: Hanserd Knollys, and calls them "godly anabaptists,"

*Judged by the church covenant and the reply of the church to the proposals of Captain Willett, both of which were undoubtedly from the pen of Mr. Myles, he was evangelical in his doctrinal views and sufficiently Calvinistic, though he probably did not belong to the extreme wing as represented by a ministerial contemporary, Rev. Mr. Treat of Eastham, whose biographer portrays him as a man of much kindness of heart, but a Calvinist of the strictest sect. "He did not profess that moderate Calvinism which is so common at the present time, and which by giving up, or explaining away the peculiar doctrines of the party like a porcupine disarmed of its quills, is unable to resist the feeblest attack, but consistent Calvinism, with all its hard and sharp points, by which it can courageously defend itself: in fine, such Calvinism as the adamantine author of the system would himself have avowed."

who "have a respectful character in the churches of this wilderness." And a recent writer truthfully characterizes him as "a man of good talents and education, with unusual energy of character. He was liberal in his religious opinions, but not loose; he was an apostle and not a proselyter. His sacrifices for conscience's sake testify to his adherence to truth, and his interest in civil society is evinced by the labors which he undertook for its prosperous advancement. His burial place is unknown, but it is supposed to be with many of his people, near his home and place of preaching, at Tyler's Point (now Barrington), Swansea. Silence alone marks the resting place of this pioneer and founder of a larger religious freedom, through the First Baptist church within the bounds of the present commonwealth of Massachusetts."*

This silence which has so long marked the resting place of this lover of liberty, this father of a New England town, this founder of a church in the wilderness, this pioneer of a better civilization, is this day happily broken, and

*Thomas W. Bicknell, in "John Myles and Religious Toleration in Massachusetts."

a suitable monument erected to his memory by the hands of an appreciative and thoughtful generosity.

Of the descendants of Mr. Myles it may be said that his son, John, Jr., lived and died in Swansea, serving many years as clerk of the town, and that his only other son, Samuel, graduated at Cambridge in 1684, went to England and continued his studies, took orders in the church of England, and returning to America became rector of King's Chapel in Boston in 1689, and continued in that office until his death in 1728. Several later descendants devoted their property and lives to their country in the war of the American Revolution. Gen. Nelson A. Miles of our time has by his eminent service to his country added distinction to the name of his great ancestor.

The strong personality of the founder of a local church often leaves its impress on the spiritual body, which he nourishes into being, and fosters during the period of its infancy. Roger Williams, John Clarke and John Myles were founders of churches, which have lived until now, and have influenced in no small measure the thought and life of their commun-

ities, and indeed the life and the institutions of the whole nation. These churches were planted within a narrow circle, in a little corner of our expanding republic; but their power has reached to our remotest boundaries. Indeed, it may be said without exaggeration "Their line is gone out throughout all the earth, and their words to the ends of the earth."

This church in Swansea, cradled in suffering and anointed with blood, though more remote than its neighbors from the tides of commerce and of life, has maintained a prosperous spiritual existence, has been the mother of churches larger and stronger than itself (see Appendix H), and has filled up the measure of its numerous days with an honorable and beneficent service, whose annals no human pen can adequately record, and no human mind can fully comprehend.

These churches of Jesus Christ, little or large, rural or urban, planted in the new communities of a growing nation, and often presided over by university trained men, have been not only the divinely appointed means of extending the empire of him who said: "Fear not little flock, for it is your Father's good

pleasure to give you the kingdom," but they have been the mighty agencies for the dissemination of intelligence and morality, for the production of social and civic virtue, and for the promotion of peace, and prosperity, and true freedom among the people. They have given to men new and higher conceptions of national greatness and glory, and have filled with an ever-increasing beauty and spiritual significance our national emblem, which waves its bright colors on every breeze from ocean to ocean, the pride, the joy and the inspiration of a free, virtuous and united people, an emblem under which it is worth while to live, and for which, if need be, it is worth while to die, an emblem on which the eyes of the fathers, who laid in tears and blood the foundations of our churches and of our Republic, would look if they could, with inexpressible delight.

“With its red for love,
And its white for law,
And its blue for the hope
That our fathers saw
Of a larger liberty.”

APPENDIX A.

Covenant adopted by the constituent members of the church.

“Holy Covenant.”

“Swansey in New England. A true copy of the Holy Covenant the first founders of Swansey entered into at the first beginning, and all the members thereof for divers years.

Whereas, we poor creatures are, through the exceeding riches of God’s infinite grace, mercifully snatched out of the kingdom of darkness, and by his infinite power translated into the kingdom of his dear Son, there to be partakers with all the saints of all those privileges which Christ by the shedding of his precious blood hath purchased for us, and that we do find our souls in some good measure wrought on by divine grace to desire to be conformable to Christ in all things, being also constrained by the matchless love and wonderful distinguishing mercies that we abundantly enjoy from his most free grace to serve

him according to our utmost capacities, and that we also know that it is our most bounden duty to walk in visible communion with Christ and each other according to the prescript rule of his most Holy Word, and also that it is our undoubted right through Christ to enjoy all the privileges of God's house which our souls for a long time panted after, and finding no other way at present by the all-working providence of our only wise God and gracious Father to us opened for the enjoying of the same, we do therefore, after often and solemn seeking to the Lord for help and direction in the fear of his holy name, and with hands lifted up to Him, the most High God, humbly and freely offer up ourselves this day a living sacrifice unto Him, who is our God in covenant through Christ our Lord and only Saviour, to walk together according to his revealed Word in the visible gospel relation both to Christ, our only Head, and to each other as fellow-members and brethren of the same household of faith. And we do humbly pray that through his strength we will henceforth endeavor to perform all our respective duties

towards God and each other, and to practice all the ordinances of Christ according to what is or shall be revealed to us in our respective place, to exercise, practice and submit to the government of Christ in this his church, viz.: further protesting against all rending or dividing principles or practices from any of the people of God as being most abominable and loathsome to our souls and utterly inconsistent with that Christian charity which declares men to be Christ's disciples. Indeed, further declaring in that as union in Christ is the sole ground of our communion, each with other, so we are ready to accept of, receive to and hold communion with all such by judgment of charity we conceive to be fellow-members with us in our Head, Christ Jesus, though differing from us in such controversial points as are not absolutely and essentially necessary to salvation. We also hope that though of ourselves we are altogether unworthy and unfit thus to offer up ourselves to God or to do Him a, or to expect any favor with, or mercy from Him, He will graciously accept of this our freewill offering in and through the merit

and mediation of our dear Redeemer, and that he will employ and improve us in this service to his praise, to whom be all glory, honor, now and forever. Amen.

The names of the persons that first joined themselves in the covenant aforesaid as a church of Christ,

JOHN MYLES, *Elder*,
JAMES BROWN,
NICHOLAS TANNER,
JOSEPH CARPENTER,
JOHN BUTTERWORTH,
ELDAD KINGSLEY,
BENJAMIN ALBY."

APPENDIX B.

Grant of New Swansea.

“Whereas, Liberty hath been formerly granted by the Court for the jurisdiction of New Plymouth, unto Captain Thomas Willett and his neighbors of Wannamoisett, to become a township there if they should see good, and that lately the said Capt. Willett and Mr. Myles and others their neighbors have requested of the Court that they may become a township there or near thereabout, and likewise to have granted unto them such parcels of land as might be accommodating thereunto, not disposed of to other townships; this Court have granted unto them all such lands that lyeth between the salt water bay and coming up Taunton river, viz.: all the land between the salt water and river, and the bounds of Taunton and Rehoboth not prejudicing any man’s particular interest; and for as much as Rehoboth hath meadow land within the line of Wannamoisett, and Wannamoisett hath lands within of Rehoboth, lying near the south line

of Rehoboth; if the two townships cannot agree about them amongst themselves, the Court reserves it within their power to determine any such controversy.

1667, March. The Court have appointed Capt. Thomas Willett, Mr. Paine, Senior, Mr. Browne, John Allen, and John Butterworth, to have the trust of admittance of town inhabitants into the said town, and to have the disposal of the land therein, and ordering the other affairs of said town.

The Court do allow and approve that the township granted unto Capt. Thomas Willett and others his neighbors at Wannamoisett and parts adjacent, shall henceforth be called and known by the name of Swansey."

APPENDIX C.

Reply of the Church to the Propositions of
Capt. Thomas Willett.

“Whereas, Capt. Thomas Willett shortly after the grant of this township, made the following proposals unto those who were with him, and by the Court at Plymouth empowered for the admission of inhabitants and granting of lots, viz.:

1. That no erroneous person be admitted into the township either as an inhabitant or sojourner.

2. That no man of any evil behavior as contentious persons, etc., be admitted.

3. That none may be admitted that may become a charge to the place.

The church of Christ here gathered and assembling did thereupon make the following address unto the said Capt. Willett and his associates, the trustees aforesaid.

(part of the record torn off.)

being with you engaged (according to our ca-

capacity) in the carrying on of a township according to the grant given us by the honored Court, and desiring to lay such a foundation thereof as may effectually tend to God's glory, our future peace and comfort, and the real benefit of such as shall hereafter join with us herein, and also to prevent all future jealousies and causes of dissatisfaction or disturbances in so good a work, do in relation to the three proposals made by our much honored Capt. Willett, humbly present to your serious consideration (before we further proceed therein) that the said proposals may be consented to and subscribed by all and every townsman under the following explications:

That the first proposal relating to the non-admission of erroneous persons may be only understood under the explications following, viz.: of such damnable heresies inconsistent with the faith of the gospel, as to deny the Trinity or any person there; the Deity or sinless humanity of Christ, or the union of both natures in him, or his full satisfaction of the divine justice by his active and passive obedience for all his elect, or his resurrection, as-

cension to heaven, intercession, or his second personal coming to judgment; or else to deny the truth or divine authority of any part of canonical Scripture, or the resurrection of the dead, or to maintain any merit of works, con-substantiation, transubstantiation, giving divine adoration to any creature, or any other anti-Christian doctrine, thereby directly opposing the priestly, prophetic or kingly office of Christ, or any part thereof.

Or secondly, of such as hold such opinions as are inconsistent with the well-being of the place, as to deny the magistrate's power to punish evil doers as well as to encourage those that do well, or to deny the first day of the week to be observed by divine institution as the Lord's or Christian Sabbath, or to deny the giving of honor to whom honor is due, or to oppose those civil respects that are usually performed according to the laudable custom of our nation each to other as bowing the knee or body, etc.

Or else, to deny the office, use, or authority of the ministry, or a comfortable maintenance to be due to them from such as partake of the

teaching, or to speak reproachfully of any of the churches of Christ in the country, or of any such other churches as are of the same common faith with us and them.

We desire that it be also understood and declared, that this is not understood of any holding any opinion different from others in any disputable point yet in controversy among the godly learned, the belief thereof being not essentially necessary to salvation such as pedo-baptism, anti-pedo-baptism, church discipline, or the like, but that the minister or ministers of the said town may take their liberty to baptize infants or grown persons as the Lord shall persuade their consciences, and so also the inhabitants to take their liberty to bring their children to baptism or forbear.

That the second proposal relating to the known reception of any evil behavior such as contentious persons, etc., may be only understood of those truly so called, and not of those who are different in judgment in the particulars last mentioned, and may be therefore accounted contentious by some, though they are in all fundamentals of faith orthodox in

judgment, and excepting common infirmities, blameless in conversation.

That the proposal relating to the non-admission of such as may become a charge to the town, be only understood so as that it may not hinder any godly man from coming among us whilst there is accommodation that may satisfy him, if some responsible townsman will be bound to save the town harmless.

These humble tenders of our desires, we hope you will without offence receive, excusing us herein, considering that God's glory, the future peace and well-being, not only of us and of our posterity who shall settle here, but also of those several good and peaceable-minded men whom you already know are like, though with very inconsiderable outward accommodation, to come amongst us, are very much concerned herein; our humble prayers both for ourselves and you is that our God would be pleased to cause us to aim more and more at his glory and less at our own earthly concernment, that so we may improve the favors that have been handed to us by our honored, nursing fathers, to the advancement

of the glory of God, the interest of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the common benefit, both of the township and colony where He hath providentially disposed of us to serve our generation.

Your brethren to serve you in Christ. Signed on the behalf and in the name of the church meeting at Swansea, by

JOHN MYLES, *Pastor*,
JOHN BUTTERWORTH."

APPENDIX D.

Action of the town upon the propositions of Capt. Willett, containing undoubtedly a complete list of the inhabitants, including the members of the church.

“The foregoing proposals being according to the desire of the church aforesaid, fully and absolutely condescended to, concluded and agreed upon by and between the said Capt. Thomas Willett and his associates aforesaid and the said church, under the reservation and explications above written, and every of them, it was sometime afterward propounded at a meeting of the said town, lawfully warned on the two and twentieth day of the twelfth month, 1669, that the said agreement might be by the whole town ratified and confirmed, and settled as a foundation order to which all that then were, or afterwards should be admitted inhabitants, and to receive lands from the town, should manifest their assent by subscription thereunto, whereupon the following order

(the said Capt. Willett and his associates aforesaid being present), was freely passed by the whole town, *nemine contradicente*.

At a town meeting lawfully warned on the two and twentieth day of the twelfth month, commonly called February, in the year of our Lord 1669, it is ordered that all persons that are or shall be admitted inhabitants within this town, shall subscribe to the three proposals above written; to the several conditions and explanations therein expressed, before any lot of land be confirmed to them or to any of them.

We whose names are here underwritten, do freely upon our admission to be inhabitants of this town of Swansea, assent to the above written agreement, made between the church of Christ now meeting here at Swansea, and Capt. Thomas Willett and his associates; as the said agreement is specified and declared in the three proposals aforewritten, with the several conditions and explanations thereof, concerning the present and future settlement of this township. In witness whereof, we have hereunto subscribed:

Thomas Willett, John Myles, John Allen,

James Browne, Nicholas Tanner, Hugh Cole, Benjamin Alby, John Browne, Samuel Wheaton, Thomas Barnes, Thomas Easterbrooke, Richard Sharp, William Ingraham, Thomas Manning, William Cahoone, George Aldrich, Nathaniel Lewis, John Thurber, Jonathan Bosworth, Joseph Lewis, William Haywood, John Thurber, Gerard Ingraham, Zachariah Eddy, Hezekiah Luther, John Paddock, Samuel Luther, Caleb Eddy, John Myles, Jr., Thomas Lewis, Joseph Carpenter, Robert Jones, Eldad Kingsley, John Martin, John Cole, Joseph Wheaton, Nathaniel Paine, Stephen Brace, Gideon Allen, John Dickse, William Bartram, Joseph Kent, Samuel Woodbury, Nehemiah Allen, Sampson Mason, Job Winslow, Obadiah Bowen, Jr., Richard Burges, John Butterworth, John West, Thomas Elliot, Timothy Brooks, Nathaniel Toogood, Jeremiah Child, Obadiah Bowen, Sr."

APPENDIX E.

Remarkable division of the inhabitants of Swansea into three ranks according to their character and influence.

Under date of February 7, 1670, the following order was passed:

“That all lots and divisions of land that are or hereafter shall be granted to any particular person, shall be proportioned according to the three ranks and written so, that where those of the first rank shall have three acres, those of the second rank shall have two acres, and those of the third rank shall have one acre, and that it shall be in the power of the selectmen for the time being, or committee for admission of inhabitants, to admit of and place such as shall be received as inhabitants into either of the said ranks as they shall judge fit, till the full number of threescore such inhabitants shall be made up, and that when the said number of threescore is accomplished, the lands that are already bought shall be divided and propor-

tioned according to the said three-fold ranks; that in the meantime, the said selectmen or committee shall have full power to grant lots unto such persons as may not be placed into any of the said ranks, until further order provides; the grants not to exceed nine acres to a man."

Then follow three columns of names, numbering, however, only forty-eight in all, divided as follows: nine in the first column, twenty-three in the second column, and sixteen in the third column. 'A pastor's lot' and 'a teacher's lot' are placed in the first column, and 'a schoolmaster's' in the second.

The record given above is as found in Baylies' 'History of New Plymouth.' What the basis of division was does not appear. Of the seven constituent members of the Baptist church, three are found in the first column, viz.: Mr. John Myles, pastor, James Browne, and John Butterworth, three are found in the second column, viz.: Nicholas Tanner, Benjamin Alby and Joseph Carpenter, and Eldad Kinsley appears in the third column.

On February 12, 1670, "to prevent the bring-

ing in of such persons to be inhabitants as may be to the prejudice of the town, it was ordered that whosoever hath taken or shall take up any lot therein and shall let out, give, or sell the same, or any part thereof, to any person or persons whatever, without the consent of the town or at least of the committee that are or shall be chosen for the management of the prudential affairs of the town at any time hereafter; then the person or persons that shall so let out, give, or sell as aforesaid, shall forfeit their whole right in such lot and buildings thereon, from them, their heirs and assigns, to the use of the town forever."

This certainly looks like a very careful oversight of the character of the inhabitants, not to say a rigid and despotic restriction of the rights and liberties of freemen. Baylies commenting on this condition of civil affairs, remarks: "This division of the people into ranks presents a remarkable and unique feature in town history. It existed nowhere else in the colony; fancy can almost discern in this arrangement the rudiments of the three Roman orders, Patrician, Equestrian and Plebeian.

This power was assumed by the five persons appointed by the Court to regulate the admission of town inhabitants in 1667, and afterwards was exercised by committees appointed by the town. These committees seemed to have exercised the authority of censors, and have degraded and promoted from one rank to another at discretion."

The committee for the admission of inhabitants in 1681 was James Brown, Sr., John Allen, Sr., and John Butterworth. They granted to several persons of the first class, their heirs and assigns forever, "the full right and intent of the highest rank," etc. It has been well said by Mr. Bicknell ("Historical Sketches," etc., p. 83). "The establishment of ranks had already created a landed aristocracy; this act of the committee proceeded a step further and made the rank hereditary. The inhabitants of the town began to understand the tendency of their extraordinary rules on this subject. Although great dissatisfaction had been caused by the several assignments of ranks, and the promotions and degradations from one rank to another, they had

not been led to see the purely undemocratic tendency of their regulations, until the further singular action of the committee occasioned a unanimous protest on the part of the town, and a declaration that the act was utterly void and of no effect. From this time the ranking system was wholly neglected, and this element of feudal tyranny enjoyed but a short life in our old town."

This unique and unparalleled condition of things which was an anachronism and an anomaly in a Pilgrim community, survived only eleven years. The wonder is that it was ever created.

APPENDIX F.

Letter from Thomas Hollis of London:

Rev. Ephraim Wheaton, the third pastor of the church, was associate pastor with Rev. Samuel Luther from 1704 to 1716, and on the death of Mr. Luther was sole pastor until his own death, April 26, 1734. His ministry was greatly blessed to the strengthening and enlargement of the church. About the year 1721 fifty persons were baptized and added to the church. The pastor sent an account of this revival to Mr. Thomas Hollis, an eminent Baptist merchant in London, who gave to Harvard University to found Hollis professorships and scholarships a sum now estimated at \$46,671.00. This was the largest single gift which the University had received at that time, and was a generous provision for the education of young men for the Baptist ministry. The letter called forth the following reply from Mr. Hollis, which has been preserved in the records of the church. It was accompanied with a gift of books to Mr. Wheaton.

“London, March 13, 1722-3.

Dear Sir—I rejoice in the success of your ministry and increase of your church, which will naturally increase your cares and your joy. I mourn because of the ignorance of your sleeping Sabbatarians. Let us be thankful for our light, pity them, pray for them, and endeavor in love to lead them into the light. God, that hath shined into our hearts by his gospel, can lead them from Sinai's covenant and the law of ceremonies into the liberty of the new covenant and the grace thereof. I pity to see professors drawing back to the law, and I desire to remember our standing is by grace; therefore not to be high-minded over them, but fear, remembering our Lord's words, ‘watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation.’ Every word of God is precious. The saints love it, and they that honor Him, He will honor, and in keeping of it there is present peace and a promise of future reward. We now live by faith and not by sight. He that endureth to the end shall be saved. Go on sowing the seed, looking up to Him whose work it is, whoever be the planter or the

waterer ; and as you abound in your labors and find Him multiplying seed unto you, may you yet abound more and more, is my sincere wish. Let no man rob us of our comfortable hope that when we cease to be here we shall be present with the Lord, in whose presence, the saint believes, is fullness of joy, in a separate state, and an expectation of greater in the resurrection, when it shall be manifested how He loved them. Let none jeer us out of our duty now to lisp forth His praise, since hereafter we expect to sing in a better manner the song of the Lamb in a nobler chorus.

In reference to your poll tax and other taxes which are necessary for the support of government and society, they are not to be esteemed a burden. 'Tis giving tribute of tithes to whom tribute is due, unless the taxes oppress you unequally because you are Baptists and Separatists. If so, then let me know (who profess myself a Baptist), and I will endeavor to have a word spoken for you to the Governor, that you be eased.

You know that your profession is not popular in your country or ours, few, if any of the

great men submitting to a plain institution. And as we profess ourselves the disciples of Christ, 'tis our duty to take up 'our cross' with patience, and pay parochial duty where we live, and voluntarily to maintain our own charges, thankful for our liberty as men and Christians, to our good God, who in His providence, has inspired many magistrates and ministers in your provinces with a truer spirit of Catholic charity than formerly.

You have heard, or may be informed by Mr. Callender, of my founding in Harvard College, and the provision I have made for Baptist youths to be educated for the ministry and equally regarded with Pedo-Baptists. If you know any duly qualified inform me, and I shall be glad to recommend them for the first vacancy. And to close: while we profess to worship God nearer to the rule of primitive institution and practice of our great Prophet and Teacher, the Lord Jesus Christ, and his Apostles, let our light so shine before men, in all holy conversation, that such as may be ready to speak evil of our way be ashamed. May serious religion and godliness, in the power of

it, flourish among you, and everything that goes in to make a true Christian. Where the true image of Christ is found in any I call them the excellent of the earth. With such I delight to associate and worship, whatever denomination they may go by among men, and this I would do till we all come into the unity of the spirit, etc. And now, dear sir, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, etc. Acts xx:32.

Your loving friend,

THOS. HOLLIS.

To Mr. Ephraim Wheaton,

Minister in Swansea, New England."

This letter is interesting not only as revealing the devout, catholic, truth-loving, peace-loving spirit of the author, and his generous sympathy for his American brethren, but also as bearing witness to the presence of Sabbatarians in Swansea at that time, and to the existence of some sort of oppressive legislation against the Baptists, which they were exhorted to bear patiently until it was unendurable. In that case Mr. Hollis would intercede with the Governor of the colony in their behalf.

APPENDIX G.

The attempt to found a Baptist church at Weymouth and its author.

In 1639 an attempt was made at Weymouth to organize a Baptist church, which was rendered unsuccessful by the opposition of the Magistrates. This attempt was the result, it has been said, of the visit "of Hanserd Knollys, a Baptist preacher from London, who went through the Plymouth towns publishing his sentiments in 1638." The authority for this statement is Hon. John W. Davis, ex-Governor of Rhode Island, in an address at the 250th anniversary of the settlement of Rehoboth. The impression which it makes is that Knollys was a Baptist at that time. This is the view also found in Cathcart's Baptist Encyclopædia. The evidence is against its correctness. Hanserd Knollys was born in Cawkwell, Lincolnshire, England, in 1598, and probably graduated at Emmanuel College, Cambridge. He was ordained as a Presbyterian in the Church of England, and held the living at Humberstone

two or three years, resigning it because he had scruples as to "the lawfulness of using the surplice, the cross in baptism, and the admission of persons of profane character to the Lord's Supper." He came out openly as a Puritan about 1636. After suffering imprisonment and other forms of persecution he sought refuge in New England, arriving in Boston in July, 1638. He was not altogether welcome, being immediately suspected of antinomianism. Upon invitation he went to Piscataqua, Maine (now Dover, N. H.), and organized there the First Church which was of the Puritan order. (See Winthrop's History of New England I, 392). His mind was in a transition state. He was becoming more and more an advanced Separatist. Owing to growing differences of opinion with his associate and some of the people, and some charges against his personal character, he returned to Boston. (For a candid discussion of the nature of those charges, and their probable baselessness, see sketch of Knollys in Sprague's Annals of the American Baptist Pulpit). Intending at first to settle elsewhere in the new world, he abandoned his

purpose at the urgent entreaty of his aged father and returned to England in December, 1641.

Sometime during this visit of less than three years he must have preached in Plymouth colony, and infected others with his changing views, which after his departure ripened into Baptist convictions. He was at that time charged with ana-baptism (see N. H. Provincial Papers I, 120, 123, also Belknap's New Hampshire I, 44), as was Roger Williams soon after his arrival in this country. It was after his return to England that Knollys became a Baptist and identified himself with that denomination. Persecution again overtook him. He was fined, stoned and imprisoned. His labors were abundant. He was a successful teacher and industrious author. He was master of several languages. He was pastor of a congregation of a thousand persons. He was a chaplain in the army, and at one time a fugitive on the continent. He was acknowledged on both sides of the Atlantic, by those who did not hold his views as well as by those who did, to be "a godly man" and "a learned

scholar." He was one of the leading men of his denomination. He died in London in 1691 at the age of ninety-three. The Baptists in England in 1845 organized a Publication Society to which they gave his name. (See Memorial Address of Rev. A. H. Quint, D. D., at 250th Anniversary of the First Parish in Dover, N. H.)

APPENDIX H.

New Churches and Early Pastors.

The following churches have been formed from the Swansea church; Oak Swamp organized in 1732, of which Rev. John Comer was pastor; Bellingham in 1736; Oswego, N. Y., in 1759, to which place a colony removed; Warren, R. I., in 1764, and Seekonk, now First East Providence, in 1794. According to Bliss "no less than seven Baptist churches were formed in Rehoboth." Backus speaks of ten churches as having been organized there, representing different phases of belief, but substantially Baptist churches, some of which became extinct. Those were days of independent thinking and of extreme conscientiousness, when it did not require a great difference of opinion to split a church, and create a new denomination. And yet the cause prospered and many followers were won. Benedict says "Truly may old Rehoboth claim to have done much for the Baptist cause; and if all the members who have emigrated to other

parts, or have lived and died within its bounds, if all the ministers who have been born in this extensive domain, or who have officiated in its bounds in connection with the various churches and interests of the Baptists could be enrolled in one list, it would not be small." Asplund mentions ten Baptist churches in Rehoboth and Swansea in 1790—two called Regular, three Six Principle, one of which had a plurality of elders, of whom one was called a "travelling" elder, two Open Communion, and three recorded as No Communion. Surely the old Swansea church was the prolific mother of churches. It is claimed that twenty-seven churches from first to last have traced their pedigree to her, not all of them remaining true to type, and several of them undoubtedly having fought a good fight before finishing their course, though they may not have kept the faith.

After Mr. Myles' decease the church was presided over by devoted and worthy men. In 1685 Samuel Luther was called by the church to succeed Mr. Myles, with the concurrence of the voters of the town, and continued in office

until 1717. He was succeeded by Ephraim Wheaton, who had been his colleague for thirteen years, and remained sole pastor until his death in 1734. Samuel Maxwell and Benjamin Harrington served the church for brief periods. In 1751 Jabez Wood became pastor, and performed the duties of the office for thirty-two years, bringing the history of the church down to near the close of the eighteenth century.

Of Samuel Luther, the second pastor, it may be said that he was one of the first settlers of the town of Swansea and was probably a Welsh immigrant. His name appears in the action of the town on the Willett proposals. He bore the name of "Captain." During his ministry the meeting house was removed to near Myles' Bridge. He is said to have been "a man of character and talents, and to have discharged the duties of his office with exemplary fidelity."

Ephraim Wheaton, the third pastor, was a son of Robert Wheaton, one of the Welsh immigrants, and a tanner by trade. He was born in 1659, and was therefore a child of four

years when the family came to America. What his educational advantages were, if he had any, we are not informed. He is said to have "exerted a great and good influence on the church and on others also. His ministry was eminently successful and the church was highly prosperous." Some of his posterity acquired distinction in their professions. A great grandson, Dr. Levi P. Wheaton, graduated from R. I. College (now Brown University) in 1778, "served in a military hospital in Providence, was afterwards surgeon upon an armed privateer and being taken a British prisoner, was put in charge of a prison ship in New York." He subsequently lived in Providence, where he practiced the profession of medicine for fifty years and more, being a learned man and an able physician. Henry Wheaton, the distinguished diplomatist and jurist, was a descendant of the fourth generation.

APPENDIX I.

WAS THE SWANSEA CHURCH A BAPTIST CHURCH?

An interesting question is suggested by Mr. Bicknell in "Historical Sketches of Barrington," p. 179, viz.: Was the church founded by Mr. Myles at first a Baptist church? Even the suggestion of a doubt on this point will occasion no little surprise, for it is opposed to the unvarying belief of all students of the period. Mr. Bicknell's language is as follows: "The broad and catholic basis of the Baptist church which was formed on New Meadow Neck in 1663, and which maintained its worship near Burial Place Hill and at Tyler's Point until 16—, drew to its fellowship all denominations of Christians in the community. It may fairly be questioned whether it was a Baptist church at all, save in name, or whether Parson Myles was not as truly a Congregationalist as a Baptist. Certainly the old church covenant and

the ordinances as administered by the good elder would be accepted as fair Congregational doctrine at the present time, and certain it was, too, that Parson Luther felt the need of making certain amendments to that noble instrument of conscience-liberty and Christian brotherhood, in order that he might be able to distinguish and separate the flock of the true Baptist fold."

This question as to the distinctive character of the church at the beginning seems to be based upon its catholicity as indicated in the original covenant of the church and in the terms of the acceptance of Mr. Willett's proposition, and also upon the supposed attitude of the second pastor, Mr. Luther, who is thought to have been a stricter constructionist than Mr. Myles as to the teachings of the New Testament and the Christian ordinances. What "supplementary notes to the original covenant," if any, "which were not relished by the Congregational element" in the community, Mr. Luther added, we may not be able to say; but in course of time there grew to be in the growing town which was increasing by

new comers, a division of sentiment on several points. The settlements of the town were remote from each other, which occasioned a change in the location of the meeting house to the inconvenience of some of the people. When Sir William Phipps brought the charter which absorbed the Plymouth Colony in the Massachusetts Bay, a new order of things under Puritan jurisdiction was sought to be introduced which was opposed to the convictions of most of the people, on the right of the civil government to interfere in church affairs, though evidently to some persons, probably the later arrivals who were not sufficiently enlightened on the point and did not accept the voluntary system in religion, the new order was welcome. These with other things led to a determination to secure a division of the town. This effort Mr. Luther and a large majority of the citizens opposed, believing it to be unwise and unnecessary. Mr. Luther's name heads the protest, and very likely he was active in his opposition. At any rate his ministry was no longer acceptable to the "new comers," who sent petition after petition for

the division of the town to Governor Joseph Dudley and the Massachusetts Court, saying "we being well assured of this honorable General Court's power and good will to help in such cases, from their repeated acts of like nature, do the more freely open our malady which bespeaks pity and cure." These words are taken from the first petition which was sent in 1711, in which they go so far as to say we have "no settled minister learned and orthodox, no church of Christ settled in order, no pastor to feed Christ's lambs among us." They had evidently completely withdrawn from Mr. Luther's ministry at that time, if they had ever been under it.

The Court of Quarter Sessions had previously issued a warrant requiring the town to choose a minister according to law, that is, according to the prescribed "orthodox" method, Puritan Massachusetts seeking to dictate to the town, and enforce upon it the support of church and minister by public tax. To this warrant they replied after much warm debate: "They had a minister that they apprehended was according to law, viz.: the Elder Samuel

Luther, and desired the vote of the town to see their assent and approbation.”

The third attempt to secure the division of the town was successful, and the petition was granted by an order of the Massachusetts Court November 18, 1717. Some time between 1711 and 1717 a Congregational church was formed with Rev. James Wilson as pastor, and immediately upon the creation of the new township it undertook the minister's support in the Puritan “orthodox” way. This method the town discontinued in 1746, soon after Barrington (the name by which it was called) passed under the jurisdiction of Rhode Island, and breathed the freer atmosphere of unrestricted religious liberty.

It looks very much as if the changed conditions in the town were brought about quite as much by the introduction of a new element under the liberal conditions of citizenship in favor of pedo-Baptists as by any change in the views and practices of the Baptist church. At any rate there appears to be no sufficient evidence that Mr. Myles and his companions were not Baptists from the beginning. That

they were "liberal," to use the word in the customary acceptance, is evident from both the covenant and the terms of agreement as to the conditions of citizenship, that is, liberal towards the Congregationalists, but decidedly not so towards those of other religious faiths, which denied the doctrine of the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, the atonement, the authority of the Scriptures and many other specified doctrines.

The covenant declares that "they would walk together according to his revealed word * * * * as brethren of the same household of faith * * * * and that as union with Christ is the sole ground of our communion each with other, we are ready to accept of, receive to and hold communion with all such by judgment of charity we conceive to be fellow-members with us in our Head, Christ Jesus." These words evidently express their terms of communion in the Lord's Supper. They were open communionists, as were many Baptists in those days and as are some at the present time. There is no intimation that they practiced any other baptism than their name implies.

In the articles of agreement as to the conditions of citizenship they grant full liberty to all who may come among them to administer and receive such form of baptism as they think right and according to their interpretation of the Scriptures. "The minister or ministers of the said town may take their liberty to baptize infants or grown persons as the Lord shall persuade their consciences, and so also the inhabitants to take their liberty to bring their children to baptism or forbear." A fair interpretation of these words is that they granted to others the same rights and liberties that they claimed for themselves. They did not expect it would always remain exclusively a Baptist town. Indeed it was not such then. They were speaking of the terms of citizenship, and not of the terms of church membership. There is no intimation that for themselves they accepted or offered any baptism but that which they believed Christ enjoined and his apostles practiced. This is the very essence of true liberalism, not the surrender of one's own honest conviction, but the granting to others the same liberty of conscience and of conduct that is claimed.

A reference to the covenant of the old Swansea church will prove beyond a question the belief and practice of Mr. Myles and his companions in the matter of baptism. "We cannot but admire at the unsearchable wisdom, power and love of God, in bringing about his own designs, far above and beyond the capacity and understanding of the wisest of men. Thus, to the glory of his own great name hath He dealt with us; for when there had been no company or society of people holding forth and professing the doctrine, worship, order and discipline of the gospel, according to the primitive institution, that ever we heard of in all Wales, since the apostacy, it pleased the Lord to choose this dark corner to place His name in and honor us, undeserving creatures, with the happiness of being the first in all these parts, among whom was practiced the glorious ordinance of baptism, and here to gather the first church of baptized believers."

APPENDIX J.

Swansea Song and Dedicatory Address.

SWANSEA SONG.

Written by Hezekiah Butterworth.

“Freedom, God and Right!”

The old Welsh Swansea Motto, usually sung to the ancient tune of “Men of Harlech in the Hollow.”

I.

“Men of Harlech in the hollow,
Men of Swansea on the billow,
Men who made the pines their pillow,
’Neath the snow sheets white,
Men of faith who never doubted,
Men whose banners ne’er were routed,
Loud the cry of Wales they shouted—
‘Freedom, God and Right!’

CHORUS.

Men of Swansea glorious,
O’er each wrong victorious,
Still, still the air bright and fair
Shall spread your motto o’er us!

Onward then like Cambrian yeomen,
Cambrian spearmen, Cambrian bowmen,
With the motto 'gainst each foeman—
 'Freedom, God and Right!'

II.

Green the groves that rose to meet them,
Strong the oaks spread out to greet them,
Tall the pines 'mid winds that beat them,
 Shone like Cambrian towers.
Whirled the ospreys there in wonder,
O'er the old rocks rent asunder
 In the wiers of flowers.

Chorus—Men of Swansea glorious, etc.

III.

Hail, John Myles, each roof tree turning
Into cabined schools of learning,
In each falling grove discerning
 Freedom's wider light!
Men who read Semitic story,
Men who changed their dreams to glory,
Sang as once the Welsh bards hoary,
 'Freedom, God and Right!'

Chorus—Men of Swansea glorious, etc.

IV.

'Mid their axes boldly swinging,
Wars of Hallelujahs singing,
To Llewellyn's legends clinging
 In their strength bedight.
Men who gave to men their birthright,
Men who gave to toil its earthright,
Men who honored men for worth-right,
 Men in virtue white.

Chorus—Men of Swansea glorious, etc.

V.

Sing with them, your new hopes sounding,
March with them, a new age founding,
With their motto still resounding,
 Lead in Freedom's van.
Theirs the folk-note, theirs in station,
First in counsels of the nation,
Pioneers of education,
 For the rights of man.

Chorus—Men of Swansea glorious, etc."

DEDICATORY ADDRESS.

BY REV. W. H. EATON, D. D.

“In this quiet place, above the ashes of the long-time dead, we have come to assign this stone to the reverent task of reminding the passerby of John Myles, and of his vigorous, manysided and eventful life. May it also serve as a reminder of the obligations which an illustrious ancestry impose upon their descendants, even to remote generations.

With all the aids which biography and history can furnish, our conception of the times in which he lived, and the conditions under which he died are very imperfect, but we know enough of the man and his work to appreciate in a measure the towering grandeur of his character and the widespread and abounding influence which emanated from his life.

Whether we look upon him as the student in college, the young convert, pastor-evangelist with missionary zeal a century in advance of his generation, the cherished servant of Cromwell, who saw in him the discriminating quali-

ties fitting him for a most delicate and difficult task, the exile for conscience's sake, the pioneer citizen, the sturdy champion of that religious liberty which has become a birthright, a founder of first Baptist churches on two continents, a pedagogue who, in rude cabins, taught little children to read, a Nestor among preachers, the man who dared to go to Boston in later years and preach the Gospel as he understood it to the persecuted First Baptist church, a counsellor of the Baptists of Newport and Providence, an unmitred bishop, the fullness, variety and intensity of his life compel our admiration.

As we gather today with uncovered heads and reverent tread about the spot where erst they laid him for his last long sleep, with purpose that his shall be no longer an unmarked grave, there comes to us all a conception of the setting of a true man in history, and of what lofty purpose and loyalty to the truth, and godlike compassion constrain men to be and to do, so may this stone, with its simple tablet, and the revival of memories which it brings, serve also as an incentive to us and to

all who may behold it, to the living of such manner of life in its entirety of service and if need be, sublimity of sacrifice, as will secure the admiration of men and the approval of heaven!

In the name of Massachusetts, State of the Puritan and the Pilgrim, the veritable battleground of religious liberty, queen of American Commonwealths; in the name of the Baptist churches of Massachusetts, the first of which he founded; in the name of old Swansea, named from his loved home in Wales; in the name of the denomination grown so many and widespread in the land that its stately march is the tramp of five millions; in the name of the Church Universal, whose freedom from statecraft he did so much to win, I dedicate this rugged, massive stone to the perpetuation, if it may be, to the end of time, of the memory of John Myles."

APPENDIX K.

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